

FREEDOM

SUMMER 2018

ANARCHIST JOURNAL

FREE/DONATION

UNION BOSS BATTLE

FOR ONCE, MILITANCY IN THE UCU PENSIONS DISPUTE WAS HIGH. SO HOW DID IT FALL APART?



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PLUS MUCH MORE!

THE RETREAT OF THE STATE

As I write, there have been more murders in London than New York so far this year, and the Home Secretary has just denied that cuts to police numbers have anything to do with the increase in young people dying. Senior retired coppers have said the opposite, with former Met Police Commissioner Ian Blair saying the neighbourhood policing scheme which allocated six officers to each ward had been cut to two.

The State is in retreat from providing the sort of services people have grown up to expect. The evidence has been there for years in the NHS, the care system, schools and housing: the fact that even law and order is failing shows how far austerity has gone: it is especially worrying given how the far-right has responded in places like Greece and Italy to the failures of the State to guarantee law and order and basic services.

The appeal of Corbyn is that he offers a return to the days when the State ran everything, even if it wasn't perfect at least it was there. Corbyn's reasoning seems to be that we can just go back to having properly funded health and social services, it's just a matter of getting the rich to pay a bit more tax.

It's a bit of a long-shot, but it is enough to attract support that would have seemed overwhelming to Ed Miliband, especially when you consider the alternative: a Tory government that rejoices in the pain it inflicts on the most vulnerable. It remains to be seen whether it can be delivered, though I think anarchists are right to be sceptical.

However, anarchists shouldn't be cheerleading the Labour Party, but thinking about what our perspectives would be in this era of the State retreating. We can learn from our comrades where this has already happened, but we also need to look at what is already happening.

A case in point is the growth of food banks, which offer emergency food parcels to people in need, usually referred to by a State or local government agency. While most of them are attached to churches, it is an example of bottom-up self-help, something we should support, while being alert to any group putting conditions on the food parcels.

It would be preferable for food banks to be entirely secular, but this is unlikely: there are no secular organisations with the infrastructure to do this. A century ago, friendly societies and other wider

labour movement bodies would have been there, however they were pushed out by the State expanding its provision.

A few syndicalists and anarchists argued at the time of the welfare state's creation in the 1900s that it would sap the resilience and fight of the working classes. It's taken a while but the effects are all too obvious now that the State is withdrawing.

Organisations will be thrown up to meet the new needs of working class communities — to feed, house, educate and care. This is already starting to happen in some areas, but communities that have taken hit after hit will also be short of the very resilience needed to fight back.

Anarchists need to be involved in supporting them, but not uncritically. There is no benefit in going down the route of trying to have anarchist groups run services because if we're honest with ourselves, it's not what we are good at. Instead, we should be fighting within any such groups for them to be democratic, open to all and not discriminate, in the way that some religious groups might be tempted to.

Svartfrosk

WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU READING?

Published every six months, this journal is part of a 132-year tradition of anarchist publishing by Freedom Press.

In 1886, *Freedom, a Journal of Anarchist Socialism* was founded by Charlotte Wilson and Peter Kropotkin as an outlet for libertarian ideals which would not be given space in the socialist publications of the day.

Below is the opening declaration of our politics, which is still carried on every page of our website at freedomnews.org.uk. To get in touch with the editorial collective, email editor@freedompress.org.uk.

"We are socialists, disbelievers in property, advocates of the equal claims of all to work for the community as seems good — calling

no-one master, and of the equal claim to each to satisfy as seems good to them, their natural needs from the stock of social wealth they have laboured to produce ... We are anarchists, disbelievers in the government of the many by the few in any shape and under any pretext."

Peter Kropotkin
October 1886



For people interested in this sort of thing, the main typefaces are Langdon, Alfa Slab One and Centabel Book. Dingbat symbols are taken from 1910 issues of Emma Goldman's *Mother Earth* magazine.

Kindly printed by Aldgate Press



ONE WORLD. ONE HUMANITY

Increasingly, we are trapped by militarised borders. Since the '80s and '90s, border controls have become more and more brutal, inhumane and all-pervasive. The answer of the capitalist-imperialist States to augmented migration has been to make it impossible for most to travel legally, build detention centres for immigrants and to carry out more deportations.

In the UK, the right to asylum has been destroyed through cuts in legal aid, a “culture of disbelief”, a media hate campaign against asylum seekers and other migrants, and quotas of people to be deported, even to countries at war. Refused asylum seekers lose all support, and are left homeless and destitute.

The idea of a “hostile environment” is nothing new. Fortress Europe has shut itself against an imaginary “invasion” by people of other races and religions. Invasions however did happen — the invasion of Afghanistan after the September 11th 2001 attacks and that of Iraq (2003-2011) by the US, UK and NATO killed and displaced millions of people, and caused a massive flow of refugees.

The Arab Spring (2011) was followed by a long season of repression. In Libya, concentration camps for migrants were built with Italian and European money following accords with Ghaddafi to control immigration to Europe (since 2002). When NATO waged war on Libya, many more boats arrived to Italy, and many more people drowned.

The so called “refugee crisis”, however, only gained general visibility in September 2015, when the war in Syria and the invasion of Northern Iraq by Daesh (ISIS) resulted in the destabilisation of the whole area and an even sharper increase in numbers of refugees. The heart-breaking photo of little Aylan Kurdi lying lifeless on a beach shocked public



opinion and contributed to the birth of a large solidarity movement — which shows where people’s hearts are: despite so many years of relentless anti-immigrant propaganda, people mobilised to help. Pity much of that beautiful solidarity movement was immediately co-opted by charities, in Calais like in Lesvos, and led in a direction convenient to the State.

Over 33,000 innocent men women and children have died in the Mediterranean since the millennium. Italy has made new accords with Libya to stop immigrants, at the same time hampering the NGOs’ boats and criminalising the rescuers. Arrivals to Italy have more than halved this year compared to the same period in 2017, “thanks” to the Libyan coastguard bringing people back to hell, but deaths in the sea have gone up in proportion, two per 100, as the journey’s conditions have become more dangerous. In Libya, black Africans are being detained in inhumane conditions, women raped; people are tortured for ransom and slave markets are flourishing, causing outrage worldwide.

But people migrating to Europe have been tortured and sold into slavery for years before the public became aware of it. There are many more arrivals on the Greek islands, and more arrivals also to Spain. 15,000-plus people are detained on the Greek islands at time of writing, in appalling and overcrowded conditions. If they are refused asylum they can be deported back to their countries or to Turkey, following accords with Erdogan, who has built (with EU money) a wall hundreds of kilometres long at the Syrian border, where Turkish soldiers shoot to kill.

Civilians are killed if they stay and if they flee. Thousands are stranded in appalling conditions on the Balkan route, border police using extreme violence to stop them. The UK is spending millions in taxpayer’s money to secure the Calais border, where they built a massive fence, and are paying the French police to harass and brutalise migrants.

In front of what is happening we cannot just stand by and watch. We must act in solidarity with our brothers and sisters. We must connect with struggles for liberation, against capitalism, for workers’ rights, for housing, services and education, against racism and fascism and against all prisons.

In the UK the Anti-Raids Network is empowering communities to successfully resist raids by immigration officers and police.

French students are joining the workers on strike and sheltering migrants in occupied university buildings. Belgian citizens are sheltering people from police raids in their own homes — in Brussels alone a growing network of over 600 households has the capacity to shelter every migrant sleeping out in that city!

We need to step away from the humanitarian/charitable frame: solidarity not charity! We need a political movement that is transnational, migrant-led and supported by people with residence rights. This is not a “humanitarian crisis”, this it is the result of politics. Mass migration is driven by imperialism, capitalist exploitation and climate change. We are all under attack, we are all migrants, we are all affected and must fight for our own lives. We must stand like one. United we stand, divided we fall!

Chiara Lauvergnac

Links

- antiraid.net
- facebook.com/noborders1world



A FUTURE LEARNING LIE

Further Education (FE), which is a resource primarily used by working class and low income people, has had a 35% funding cut since 2009. This has led to around 1 million fewer adult learners studying in FE.

The official government position is all about “readying Britain for the high-tech future” but its policies are in reality running down the colleges necessary to do that. Whatever the outcome of technological change in the workplace, shutting down whole departments and making access more difficult is not “readying” anyone for anything.

The 2008 recession did not see a massive rise in unemployment but instead an increase in people working in insecure part time and short term work, often for multiple employers at once, and a squeeze on pay and conditions. People on benefits are being bullied and berated into work but are simultaneously being denied access to vocational training.

Many courses now charge high fees, for example the most popular construction qualifications cost over £1,000. The government response when FE teachers lobbied Parliament saying that students could not afford these fees was to say that students could take out career development loans. The nursing bursary, which opened up this career for so many people, has now ended, despite NHS staff reporting a shortage of nurses.

The cuts to funding mean a lack of crèche places along with other forms of support that students need, such as support for students with disabilities. Services offering advice and advocacy for problems with benefits and housing have been cut exactly when these issues have got much worse. The government is forcing through a programme of college mergers which means job cuts, longer distances to travel and a reduced range of courses.

People who need help with basic literacy or maths may need years of study before they can even start a vocational course but students have less and less time to be able to access this vital education. Students who are on JSA are pushed around and made to attend constant interviews and are often not allowed to finish their courses. The number of unemployed people who



are studying in FE is falling while students who are working are charged high fees for many courses, even students on very low incomes, and struggle to keep up with their studies.

People are being forced off benefits and bombarded with a constant stream of “no jobs for life” demands to improve your skills, get into work, get qualified, but this is being made harder and harder for them to do. The benefit system is set up to get people into a job, any job, it doesn’t matter about long term gaining skills or useful experience or viability of the job as long as that person can be ticked off on the “job” target. This means more and more people are pushed into the already crowded ‘unskilled’ job market, while average rents for those on lowest incomes have risen 45% between 2010-16, so making ends meet is getting close to impossible.

FE has been the pathway for so many people, not just to better paid work but to education in the wider sense. Learning to read and write or use a computer is not only about “getting into work” but is an essential empowerment which must be

defended for everyone. Some basic skills courses are now not accessible to people who are above retirement age, even though old people learning to read and write or speak English is a joyful thing to see.

FE previously offered a huge variety of courses, ranging from dollhouse making or pastry cookery to foreign languages, which people could study just for enjoyment. Now anything that can’t be justified as employability is either closed or only offered at prohibitively high fees. Whether it is learning to read, getting a vocational qualification or learning a musical instrument, being able to study and access classes is essential to people getting the most out of life. It is also a place people can learn skills and confidence for defending themselves against employers and landlords and to come together with other people.

Fingers Malone



BEATING LETTING AGENTS



Brighton SolFed writes on lessons learned over the first year of its efforts to build up an anarchist housing union.

After a string of successful cases largely against wage theft in the hospitality sector, Brighton Solidarity Federation launched our housing union in June 2017. Our experience in Brighton was of rents rocketing up, while conditions were getting worse. Huge increases in student numbers led to ever more scumbag landlords and letting agencies shoving more and more people in ever smaller spaces, and becoming increasingly brazen in withholding deposits. Brighton and Hove is a city with an incredibly transitory population, and this makes it ripe for the worst kinds of exploitation.

We wanted to focus on our direct action approach, rather than a legalistic model. While we made sure to inform tenants of such possibilities and signposting where appropriate — for example in cases of deposit theft using the Deposit Protection Scheme (DPS) — we were clear to explain why we don't pursue cases in this way.

With the DPS, landlords and agencies have three different schemes to choose from, so it is not in their interests to consistently rule in favour of tenants. Moreover, agencies pay staff for such administration, who have knowledge and experience of the regulations, meaning the deck is stacked in their favour.

Direct action public campaigns also help to highlight that many of us share these problems, and that our power lies in banding together to fight them. DPS procedures keep problems private and help agencies to guard against the formation of solidarity and support amongst their tenants.

And of course not all tenants have the evidence required to challenge a deposit deduction. The landlord/tenant relationship is fundamentally exploitative, suggesting that someone only has the right to a home if they line someone else's pockets. We think this is wrong, so when even more money is taken from tenants via deposit deductions, our solidarity is with tenants whether or not they have the types of 'evidence' required by a DPS.

While deposit theft is one of main issues presented we have also been determined not to constrain our actions to this. Where tenants have been forced to live in an unsanitary shithole, and then had their deposit kept on spurious grounds, we have felt that just trying to get the deposit back wasn't enough, and we should pursue compensation for the terrible conditions they had been forced to live in.

In one case that we had in late summer 2017 the tenants had had to endure damp, mould and a bug infestation.

We supported them with a direct action campaign that resulted in them receiving £3,900 in compensation, as well as the return of their deposit (£2,400), from one of the most notorious student lettings agencies in the city.

Another thing we felt important was to not be constantly on the defensive and trying to get back money after people had left the property, and so we have fought several cases demanding repairs, basic amenities (in one case, a working cooker!) or for issues like damp to be dealt with. We weren't content to just let these issues build up until people were forced to leave.

From the start, we've sought to provide advice on rights, and help in composing demand letters to landlords, even where

people felt they were unwilling to engage in a direct action dispute — we are regularly holding advice surgeries and drop in sessions.

It's been important to support people whether they are members or not — the conditions that allow agents to rip us off affect the working class as a whole, and our politics mean we'll fight against this. We stress that this is their case, and that they are in the driving seat, but that we will offer advice, solidarity and support (so long as it doesn't contradict our politics).

So far, this strategy has worked well with victories and several tenants joining us as a result of our campaigns alongside them, and many more supporting campaigns other than their own. We want to build our union so we can be an effective class fighting force, not just as growth for its own sake, or to build our credentials for careers in the radical NGO sector.

Along the way we've encountered a number of themes — there are a significant layer of exceptionally scummy agencies whose entire business model relies on ripping off tenants' deposits and not providing even a basic level of service.

At a certain point, as campaigning continues and people become more aware of their basic rights, things will come to a head. So far, some agencies have managed to just about survive direct action campaigns, but at some point we don't think they will be able to survive their tenants working together put a stop to their tricks and dodgy tactics. If an agency can't survive without using these business practices, we're happy to see them collapse.

On the other hand, we've also remained aware that even the "good" agents are still fundamentally surviving on exploiting people, and living off people's need for a home. Even the best letting agent or landlord is a parasite, and where they are exploiting tenants, we will fight them.

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RUN OUR OWN UNION...

it to most of the membership, the nature of the ballot makes it virtually impossible to continue the strike. Solidarity and confidence in collective action are painstakingly constructed, hard won and easily shaken. It can seldom survive the highest elected official of the union withdrawing support and it can seldom survive the discovery that any substantial minority of members are anxious to end the dispute. Continuing requires a unity of purpose that the ballot in itself destroys. Disingenuous advocates will tell you ballots exist to “test the temperature” mid-dispute, but everyone knows an exec-endorsed agreement will never go down to defeat. Balloting meant the end.

But getting it to ballot was tricky. Days after the deal came out criticisms were beginning to emerge. The network of activists that had appeared around #NoCapitulation was mobilising. They were circulating details, arguments, organising emergency mass meetings where members were voting that negotiators go back and clarify aspects of the offer. Many gave such a mandate to their branch delegates ahead of a meeting at Carlow Street.

The previous meeting at national HQ had been a disaster for the leadership, with branch after branch reporting total opposition, forcing the Higher Education Committee to vote against the first shitty deal. But this time, the deal was slightly more appealing and delegates more divided.

A mixed response at the meeting was more than enough for union officials to pull a fast one. Upon arrival delegates got presented with new information via a letter from the employers and another by the pensions trustees, immediately confusing any branch mandates. A long meeting followed where activists from around the country talked at length about their members’ feelings on the deal and the prospect of a ballot. Delegate after delegate expressed mixed feelings, relaying questions and uncertainty, many suggested the union should go back and get some of them answered before it went to members.

At the end of the meeting, the delegate from Liverpool finally asked that they be allowed a card vote. The union

had provided cards for such but now declared no vote would be necessary. A helpful union official had been taking notes, “tallying” branch positions and they had everything they needed. The union was comfortable that an official’s interpretation of people’s remarks was definitely the best way of assessing positions. A majority for a ballot was declared! The Higher Education Committee then voted accordingly.

No subsequent vote on whether to recommend acceptance was held but that didn’t matter. The general secretary would happily provide her own recommendation.

And so to the ballot, mid-holiday, a half-cooked deal on inconclusive footing. The choice, as Sally Hunt put it (in a missive we were required to read twice prior to accessing our ballots) was simple. Say “yes” and the panel would set to work on saving our pensions. Say “no” and the union would be forced into weeks, months of strikes, in pursuit of guarantees that the employers simply wouldn’t give. The advice painted a picture where the alternatives were acceptance or the apocalypse. For the next four days members would get a daily update from the general secretary on how great the deal was.

Such are the laws of trade union gravity. How can we expected to fight disputes and fight the machinery of our union at the same time? How can we bring members with us for exhausting, sustained industrial action when the maximum authority of the union fights us every step of the way?

The result was followed by a lot of rage from the “no” side, but “yes” voters weren’t wrong to conclude the dispute was basically over from the moment UUK gave the UCU leadership an out. We screamed “stitch up” but we all know Sally Hunt and co. broke no rules, which offer them carte blanche to shut down strikes whenever they damn well please.

Realistic redress for shoddy behaviour on Hunt’s part remains four years away at the next general secretary election, when we’ll all have forgotten and when the only choice likely to be offered will be the union’s other contemptible faction, the SWP-heavy UCU Left.

What university staff have to ask is whether this is what they want from a workers’ organisation. A union where the democratic mechanisms are controlled by a bureaucratic clique whose contempt for branch activists and patronising attitude towards their membership’s capacity undermines every action the union undertakes, ensuring we have to make the same pointless sacrifices to fight the same encroachments, because we never actually win.

Could we organise another way, one which uses the power of the union’s component branches to give us strength, unity and momentum, rather than as a semi-despised cadre of corporals, tasked with marching members to the top of the hill only so the officers can dismiss them?

At a bare minimum we can surely no longer tolerate the standard operating procedure, where branch delegates are gathered to give cover for what the leadership intend to do anyway, where the power to call and design strike-starting and ending ballots rests solely with the leadership. At the very least a strike committee composed of recallable branch delegates would return control of these aspects of our disputes to the people involved, with a sense of momentum at local level.

Beyond that, could we even dream of a genuinely rank-and-file, bottom-up union? Where the tactics, actions to take, the questions to ask of the members are not the sole preserve of professional negotiators?

I think we could. It would take either sustained activism within the union or founding a new one, with an imaginative manifesto on how to organise in a participative, rather than consultative way, without bureaucratic manoeuvring. Together we could be pioneers, we could create a new kind of union, fit for 2018. Together we could shut all the Carlow Streets.

Jose Collina



BIGOTRY AND MURDER

ON THE STABBING OF NAOMI HERSI

On March 18th Naomi Hersi, a black trans woman, was found dead at Heathrow Palace Hotel in Hounslow. She died of knife injuries. Shortly after, a local man and a teenage girl were arrested in connection with her murder. Naomi's last post to Twitter was an article titled "Trans Women of Colour Face an Epidemic of Violence and Murder".

Her death was reported by a small number of mainstream media outlets three days after the tragic incident and the reports followed the usual pattern the violence against trans people is approached.

In many cases, Naomi was misgendered, with some media opting to report "a man stabbed to death". The Metropolitan Police, in their press release, decided not to mention Naomi's gender, instead using the male name she was born under. This despite overwhelming evidence that violence, hate crime and discrimination against trans and non-binary people for what they are is a real problem, and is especially affecting trans and non-binary people of colour.

Quite likely Naomi's murder is yet another, and the most tragic, example of this reality in the UK in recent months. Naomi's death and the subsequent approach to it is symptomatic of profound discrimination against transgender people in the UK.

According to a Stonewall report released in January, two in five trans people and three in ten non-binary people have experienced a hate crime or incident because of their gender identity in the last 12 months.

More than a quarter (28 per cent) of transgender people in a relationship have faced domestic abuse from a partner in the last year. One in eight trans employees (12 per cent) have been physically attacked by colleagues or customers in the last year. More than a third of trans university students (36 per cent) have experienced negative comments or behaviour from staff in the last year.

Two in five trans people (40 per cent) adjust the way they dress because they

fear discrimination or harassment. This number increases to half of non-binary people (52 per cent).

Two in five trans people (41 per cent) said that healthcare staff lacked understanding of specific trans health needs when accessing general healthcare services in the last year.

One would think that, considering this overwhelming evidence that trans and non-binary people are a vulnerable, discriminated against minority needing support in their struggle, the left would rally in solidarity. However for many that is certainly not the case. As proven by the events at the London Anarchist Bookfair last year, some anarchists are also influenced by trans-exclusionary radical feminism.

Just a few days before Naomi's death, an anti-trans rights event in was held in Parliament. The event was sponsored by Tory MP and anti-abortion activist David Davis, but that did not stop a number of radical, and presumably left, feminists from attending to voice their views on the issue.

With moral outrage not that dissimilar to the usual rhetorics of Daily Mail and other right-wing tabloids, the speakers hit out at transgender people by saying they "parasitically" invade women's spaces and are a threat to women's liberation.

In a rather hyperbolic fashion, the radical feminists criticised a "trend of fashionable transgenderism", described trans rights struggle as: "internet exploited sexual fetishes that try to make themselves a rights movement", claimed that trans women "parasitically occupy" women's

bodies: all while referring to some high-profile trans women as men.

The recent anti-trans angle of radical feminism seems to be campaigning against the proposed changes to Gender Recognition Act.

The proposed changes would spare trans people the humiliating process currently required for legal recognition of their gender. Those opposing the law change cry out the end of women's rights, the end of lesbianism, or the end of women's rights altogether. The whole issue is often presented as some sort of patriarchal (read: lead by men) attack on womanhood. Sadly, many women fall for it.

Obviously, the Gender Recognition Act should be discussed by women: both cis and trans together.

However, for as long as the radical feminists take over this discussion with their bigoted views, no progress can be made.

For as long as this discussion focuses on attacks on the already discriminated against — and ostracised by general society — minority rather than the possible threat of cis men taking advantage of the law meant to make the lives of said minority easier in order to abuse women, no progress can be made.

For as long as perpetrators — the trans-exclusionary radical feminists — present themselves as victims, for as long as some parts of the feminist movement rests convinced that the mere existence of someone else is a threat, or question the very reality of this existence, no progress can be made.

As anarchists, we need to take a firm position on this issue of solidarity with trans and non-binary people: just ordinary citizens who deserve respect and recognition and a life free of violence and abuse for who they are, but also as our allies and comrades.



FIGHTING FOR THE GREEN

A radical network of environmental activism, Earth First! runs two annual major events in Britain, the Winter Moot in the early part of the year and a Summer gathering, taking place this year on August 15th-20th in Sussex. Below, an organiser with the gathering writes on EF!s ethos, beginnings and why the gatherings have been gaining strength over the last few years.

The aim of the Earth First! Summer Gathering is to provide a space to meet up, share practical skills, learn from and inspire each other, discuss ideas to make our actions and campaigns as strategic and effective as possible and build the world we want to live in. We also hope that there'll be a fair amount of plotting and planning, as well as fun and relaxation.

It's a chance to act out a little of our vision: organising non-hierarchically, supporting each other, celebrating diversity within community, living sustainably and a DIY culture that supports both individual responsibility and collective action, that builds trust, mutual aid, respect and community, whilst enabling healthy debate and challenging discussion.

The gathering consists of six days of workshops, networking and planning actions, run without leaders by everyone who comes along, so come prepared to chip in!

The last few years have seen a huge increase in interest in Earth First! with many new people, groups and workshops. This exciting resurgence in Britain is being driven by the growing threats from fracking, nuclear, bioenergy, GM, roadbuilding, incineration and more, which are focusing many people's attention on the growing need to halt the destruction of our battered ecosystems and start repairing the damage that has been done. We also now have a full stream of animal rights-focussed workshops as we have many skills to share with each other, and campaigns often cross over.

What is EF!?

Earth First! was formed in the UK in 1991, in response to an increasingly corporate, compromising and ineffective environmental community. It is not an organisation, but a movement. There are no 'members' of EF!, only Earth First!ers. We believe in using all of the tools in the toolbox, from grassroots and legal organising to direct action and monkeywrenching.

The general principles behind Earth First! are non-hierarchical organisation and the use of direct action to confront, stop and reverse the forces responsible for the destruction of the Earth and its inhabitants.

EF! is not a cohesive group or campaign, but a convenient banner for people who share similar philosophies.

If you agree with the above and you are not racist or otherwise discriminatory, if you believe action speaks louder than words, then Earth First! is for you.

Whether you think of EF! as a movement, a network, an idea or simply a name to use for actions, get involved — you are Earth First! Our structure is without formal leadership and we do it for passion, love and rage. To put it simply, the Earth must come first.

Why Earth First!? Why Now?

While the multitude of today's environmental NGOs all started small, with high ideals and a can-do attitude, they soon foundered on the rocks of corporatism.

Take any group of well-meaning people, put them in a big office and pay them reasonable salaries, and they will soon find it increasingly difficult not to make compromises, to preserve the flow of money which sustains them.

The present system is completely dependent on continual economic growth and that very growth can only be achieved by consuming more and more resources, producing more and more

waste. Saving the planet, and ourselves, implicitly means destroying the very system which mainstream organisations are a part of.

Mainstream environmentalism has become compromised and ineffective while the threats we face now ever more urgent. Meanwhile a tidal wave of corporate greenwash, almost invisible it is so prevalent, is seeking to confuse, distract and delay any resistance to an ever more aggressive push to monetise, and destroy, what remains of the natural world.

Without people who will take a principled stand, tell it like it is and offer a vision of a world which is not centred on the system that is destroying it, we are all doomed. Currently, if there is anywhere that those people might come together, be inspired and supported, it is Earth First!

At its best EF!'s style offers a way forward. We aren't rebelling against the system because we are sour on life, we are fighting for beauty, for life, for joy.

We laugh at our opponents and we laugh at ourselves, we are willing to let our actions set the finer points of our philosophy rather than debating endlessly about our programme. We are willing to get started now, make mistakes, to learn as we go.

When mounting threats from all sides are driving a renewed awareness of the importance of defending and repairing our battered ecosystems, the resurgence of Earth First! in Britain is a hopeful sign. Whether we can all make it live up to this promise is a question for the future, but right now it is a very small oasis in a very large desert. Let us drink our fill, and be more possible than they can powerfully imagine.

To offer workshops please email workshops@earthfirstgathering.org

For anything else please email site@earthfirstgathering.org



TOO SOON, VICTORY FOR T

In the 1970s the French government announced its next major airport expansion in Notre-Dame-des-Landes, Nantes. The 200-hectare site, projected to become the third largest airport in the country, represented a massive threat to the environment and drew significant opposition from locals and green campaigners.

Defeated at the time, the project was resurrected in 2003 by the Nantes mayor, who classified it as a public utility, allowing compulsory purchase of the required land.

Over the next 15 years, a community of resistance was established in the region which came to be known as the Zone à Défendre, or ZAD, for short.

Abandoned houses were re-occupied, shack dwellings and road barricades sprung up from 2009 onwards, rallies were held and farm experiments begun on land which had been bought up by the State and marked for the bulldozers.

Filled with anarchist punks, eco-nerds, back-to-the-land neo-peasants, local farmers and political dreamers, ZAD quickly became a cause celebre of the global environmental resistance and a bete noir of successive French governments.

Over the course of the next decade ZAD weathered raids, vilification in the French press, confrontations with local authorities and the everyday hardships of living off grid with hard winters and wet autumns.

But this year the Zaddists have been facing their most difficult prospect — winning.

In January the new Macron government admitted defeat and the airport, which had long-since lost its impetus, was dropped from the docket. Amid the celebration however many of the ZAD were voicing their worries about what would happen next.

The project had always been held together by its enemies as much as its friends. In the absence of the greater foe, divides between collectivists, nimbys, liberals, individualists and the like would start to come to the surface.

The State has now begun looking for allies to help enact its great revenge and crush the ZAD from within, as well as launching a new crackdown in April, bringing in 2,500 riot police with one goal — crush the radicals.

Below, a Zaddist writes on their experience of the zone as its victorious winter turned into a spring of self-sabotage and State reprisal.

Many of you are wondering what is happening here, wanting to listen at the doors of our cabins, our trucks, our rooms, our houses, our tents and makeshift shelters. As spring brings the renewal, in our lives it's still winter.

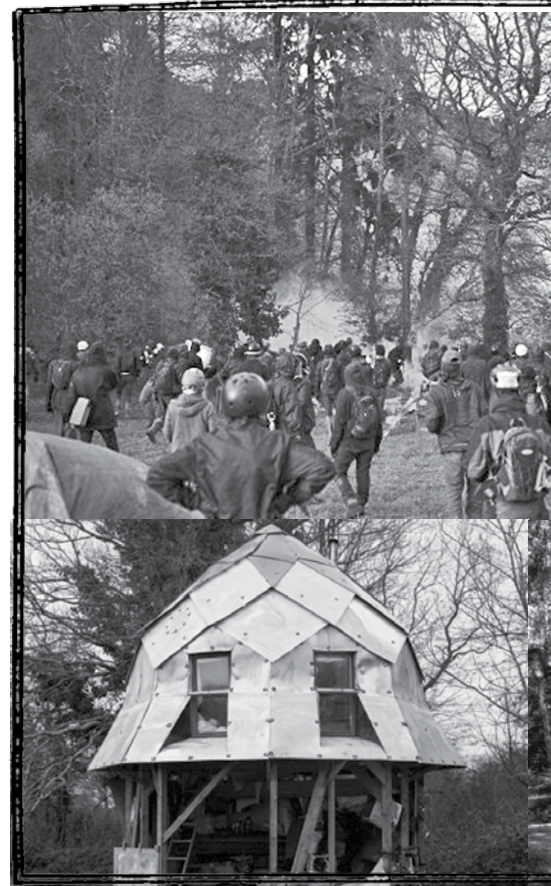
Both the cold breath of internal battles within our beautiful ZAD and the winds of the battles to come against the world closing up on us are blowing strong. I had a dream of unconditional solidarity between all those who fought against the construction of this airport. Just like two friends ready to take a blow for each other, even when in disagreement with each other. The end result is well below my expectations.

We find ourselves divided even within the occupation movement. Various setbacks have happened. Pressure blows up, overriding rules, collective communication tools (inter-committee contacts, press contacts) are confiscated; attempts are made to make the movement uniform; centralising of relations with the other components of the movement, decisions are made bypassing collective processes; there is violent and authoritarian political policing.

It now seems necessary to take back what we fought for. To reaffirm our identity against the fascist actions of those who used to be our companions or comrades in struggle.

Almost all of us arrived here with a marginal status that makes us ungovernable, mysterious, disorganised, unknowable and wary of power and its centralisation. We applauded each initiative from the most violent to the most inefficient without dissociating ourselves, without individualising the actions. Most of us were Camille, we were all Zaddists.

We mainly legitimised and explained the political acts of ours equals rather than condemning them.



Clockwise from top left: State forces clash with Zaddists in April

We accepted the chaos and lack of control we had over our neighbours. Today for me this is no longer true.

Some people have emerged over the years as amazing strategists, bureaucrats, politicians and journalists. Many of us are now the good little soldiers for the political strategies of these groups. We must stay in the rank and file so as not to disturb their tactics and their communications. We must obey and not speak too loudly, or expose ourselves to the threat of being despised — or of ending up in a car's trunk.

I am not against the idea of building a united, shared and resilient political future with other components of the movement. It's even my greatest hope. But it will not happen at the cost of what I am.



THE ZAD LED TO DESPAIR



1, injuries caused by police firearms, and some of the buildings torn down during the spring assault

Many of us want the Zad to remain a front line against liberal and patriarchal thoughts, while persisting as a zone of political, social and peasantry experimentation. For we have arrived damaged, marginal, impulsive, borderline, pirate, teknohead, druggy, syndicalist, in psychological distress, hypersensitive, engaged, primitivists, drug addicts, alcoholic, hippy, punk ... or just fragile.

Some of us are still so, and we will not dress up in a certain way in order to give an "acceptable" image. Many of us are ready to wage an internal and silent war against those who impose their collective vision or tactics over individual freedom of action and opinion against those who make use of psychological or physical violence for politicians.

In my opinion, the formal groups of the Zad (chips, cmdo, poms) should officially dissolve, no longer publish texts and no longer come to the

assemblies on the Zad as a component of the movement but as individuals. Today we see the result of this group-based sectarianism in the minds of each and every one of us, and in this way we are moving away from the humanist values of sharing and solidarity.

It drowns the individual and makes them question everyday: Am I legitimate to give my opinion in front of this group of people strongly united to block? Do I have enough affinity to go to such an appointment or assembly? Is this project open if it's this group that is carrying away with it? Will I be despised by this group of people when I have a contradictory position? Will I be supported by my own group?

The peculiarity of the group is the unified language, the group airs its concerns. Ironically the group often agrees to despise the same thing or the same person, while on the other hand the group can itself be despised without

taking into account the individuals that compose it.

I don't deny the usefulness of federating to carry out a job, a battle, an action. But the group should appear and disappear according to circumstances. It is ephemeral, it must not be named or coagulate, if it is formed, it is already too late. It must change to avoid collapse. If a new group is created within the existing group then it is dead. And especially if the group silences its individualities then it no longer exists.

The Zad is not a group, it is a territory. The Zad is only a group when it has to organise its daily life, defend itself, communicate, gather or talk about itself. And in these moments it cannot bear yet another group acting on its behalf, even from within. The Zad is a palette of individuality with all colours as rich as each other with a common front.

It is useless to deny the differences which compose it nor to hide them under the sacrosanct concept of unity. I affirm my desire, as others do, to deconstruct power wherever it is and wherever it is born. Whether it's a person or a group of people.

It is a daily effort on power that one incarnates or that the other person embodies. As tiring as this work is, it is the foundation of our individual liberties. I advocate a diversity of tactics, choices and political views, ways of life, past or future experiences, as long as they do not impose themselves on us individually and they do not harm our daily life. (It appears necessary to clarify this: If an isolated political action provokes a repressive state answer on each and every one of us, our values advise us against dissociating ourselves from it. Even if it is it contradicts with our tactics and general opinion. It seems easier to applaud a burnt police car burnt 300 km than to support a smaller action near home.) That is to say, I would fight to defend those who will become in necessity of defence, without distinctions, so that we can continue to make exchanges relative to conflicting issues and to the convergences that drive us forward.

SOLARPUNK AND ANARCO

Social transformation never happens through economic or legal changes alone. Those changes are always accompanied by alterations in the more informally transformative spheres of culture and ideology, shaping the nuts and bolts of how people think and act. Anarchists have always acknowledged this. Indeed, if there's one thing anarchists are known for among the general public, it's having a leg in several artistic, musical, and philosophical subcultures. This goes way back. Peter Kropotkin and Emma Goldman weren't just exquisite early theorists of class struggle and anarchisation, they also wrote entire books on Russian literature and modern theatre respectively.

However, I've noticed a tragic tendency as of late (i.e. the last couple of decades) to view anarchist activity in the cultural and ideological fronts as separate and apart from activity on the political and economic fronts. At worst, I've seen some involved in the latter dismiss most of those involved in the former as "apolitical" or as mere "lifestylists", holding themselves up as exemplars of "real" anarchist action — which, from what I can see, seems to consist of writing articles for newspapers no one reads and occasionally waving a few red-and-black flags around at strikes and protests. If that's what "real" political activity looks like, it doesn't do much in terms of accomplishing libertarian political goals.

To be fair, such libcom types aren't wrong when they claim that so much of cultural anarchism is rife with people who have no commitment to social struggle or system change, viewing anarchy as a mere means of personal rebellion and self-expression. That's always been a problem. The bohemians, the hippies, the punks, and the techies have thus far given us lots of nice artworks, though they've failed to deliver the dissolution of the state and worker self-management of the economy.

But given that the prophesied proletarian revolution of the workerist anarchists is a good century or more overdue, one could say the achievements of cultural anarchism and class struggle anarchism — when considered as separate entities — are about equal.

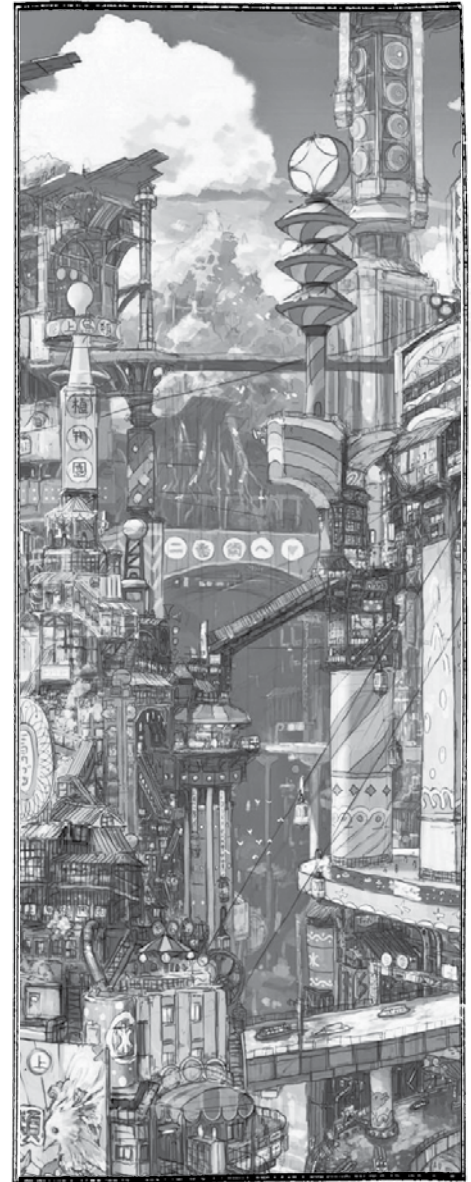
They've delivered many small and cumulative victories as part of larger movements (e.g. in arts, education, civil liberties, and workers' campaigns), but the long-term ideal of social anarchy remains as far off beyond the horizon as ever.

One of the main sources of this relative distrust between those involved in cultural-ideological struggle and those involved in political-economic struggle — and perhaps the absence of more significant gains we might get from better cooperation between the two fronts — lies, I believe, in the lack of an adequate means of conceptualising how they interrelate. On this issue, and despite the dismissals of much cultural-ideological activity as apolitical, I'd like to propose that both forms of activity are political, but political in different ways. One is infrapolitical ("infra-" meaning underneath), while the other is megapolitical ("mega-" meaning grand or overarching).

By infrapolitics, I mean the forms of cultural and ideological action people engage in which aren't formally political, but nevertheless form the basis of social-political reality at both the interpersonal and systemic levels of society, as they shape the way we conceive of, relate to, and interact with the social reality. Things like making art, creating counter-cultural scenes, injecting political ideas into various cultural milieus, philosophising, and creating alternative forms of education.

By megapolitics, I mean most of what's considered "political" in the traditional sense: trying to effect change in the functioning of the social system as a whole, in particular its governance and jurisprudence with regard to the people. Things like municipalism, syndicalism, and activism in the most familiar sense.

Infrapolitics should always be of interest to anarchist activism because it's in infrapolitical spaces that the seeds of practical (megapolitical) change are sewed within the social imaginary. We can cultivate the values of individual autonomy, voluntary cooperation, and anti-hierarchical organising in popular consciousness and behaviour through means which aren't recognised as



"political" in the formal sense, but nonetheless have demonstrable effects on how people act in formal political contexts.

Which brings me to what I'd like to highlight as one of the most promising potential infrapolitical spaces social anarchists would be wise to explore and become active in: a subculture called solarpunk.

Born in the early 2010s online, and picking up momentum around the middle of the decade, it's a form of ecological futurism which has found expression in science-fiction, drawings and crafts, and now, to a growing extent, in radical utopian politics.

CHIST INFRAPOLITICS

You may be familiar with the more famous suffixed-punk subcultures of cyberpunk and steampunk, and solarpunk is, in a way, a natural synthesis of the lessons gleaned from both.

Cyberpunk imagines a future gone wrong, taking as its premise the evolution of current society and technology down a dark path, full of pollution, corporate domination, and killer robots. Steampunk imagines a past gone right, taking as its premise the evolution of Victorian society and technology down a bright path, full of adventure, anti-imperialism, and sky pirates. Finally, solarpunk takes the same reimagining approach as steampunk, attempting to demonstrate a set of “what if?” scenarios and bright alternative paths society and technology could take — instead of the industrialist and imperialist wreck we got at the tail end of the 1800s — but like cyberpunk, it focuses on a theoretical future instead of the past.

Looking at our contemporary circumstances, what seems most probable, given the expected course of social and technical development, is something closer to the depressing gloom of a cyberpunk future. Maybe not as bad as *Blade Runner* or a William Gibson novel, though still not something to look forward to.

But what if the possibilities are more open and mutable than that? What if we still had the option to choose something brighter and steer the course of socio-technical development toward it? For solarpunk, the historical path not taken is one that’s available to us right now.

Solarpunk imagines a future gone right, taking as its premise the evolution of society and technology down a bright path, full of green tech, nonhierarchical cultures, and gorgeous art nouveau architecture (that last one is subjective, but I thought I’d throw it in there). Automation of toil is widespread, 3D-printing and micro-manufacturing replaces alienating mass production, and labour as a practice is artisan-ised, emulating William Morris’s dream of work being made into play.

It’s a world of decentralised and confederated eco-communities, using technology for human-centric and eco-

centric ends rather than for accumulating power and profit — mending the metabolic rift between first nature (the natural world) and second nature (human culture) — and where social hierarchies of race, gender, sexuality, and disability are considered horror stories from the past “oil age”.

Solarpunk is futurist, but it’s a futurism of a rooted and practical kind. It finds its visions of alternative life-verses on technologies, customs, and modes of being which already exist in the present, drawing out what’s liberatory and ecological right now and moving it from the circumference of the world’s ordering to its centre. It’s remarkably similar to the method of social anarchism: educing the liberatory within the already-existing.

As of right now, solarpunk is a pretty small scene. For the most part, interest in it is confined to a small few Facebook groups, Tumblr and Wordpress blogs, Pinterest folders, and a handful of tech hobbyists. In arts and fiction, it’s had a smattering of comics and short story collections, such as last year’s anthology *Sunvault*, most of which explore fictional eco-utopias.

What should make it of interest to anarchists is how similar the underlying values of solarpunk are to those of social anarchism, in particular to the post-scarcity anarchism of Murray Bookchin: decentralism, the blending of the ecological with the technological, the fusion of the functional with the ornamental, local autonomy, participatory decision-making, and unity-in-diversity. Almost by accident, solarpunks ended up coming to most of the same conclusions as anarchists by means of art. Aesthetically, it’s a celebration of egalitarianism on the basis of freedom, of which political anarchism is the natural complement.

So while it’s small at the moment, both anarchists and solarpunks could have much to gain from collaborating and from getting immersed in each other’s worlds. For anarchists, solarpunk could become a fecund playground for elaborating upon libertarian ideas and practices through the mediums of aesthetics and fiction. For solarpunks, the visions of free and

ecological societies glimpsed at through its eco-utopias and experiments in eco-technology can act as a gateway to Kropotkinian theories of how to remake the culture, economy, and polity on freer and ecological lines.

Social anarchism of course is no stranger to the worlds of arts and (sub) culture. Though for the most part this has been in the form of individual anarchists using a given medium or work to explore anarchistic ideas at the level of personal liberation. What’s rarer is using culture as a whole to grow libertarian consciousness on a mass scale. That is what we need to try to do more of in the future, and that’s what solarpunk may have the potential to catalyse.

We need artworks which instil a consciously anti-authoritarian way of looking at the world, and a libertarian ethos of autonomy, mutual aid, and ecological interrelationism. Solarpunk is one of the best available cultural hotbeds for generating artworks of those kinds. Its unique format of eco-speculation gives artists the freedom to imagine wild and alternative ways of ordering the world, but with enough of a connection to the nitty-gritty reality of the conditions we now exist in to draw a practical trajectory from what we’re stuck with now to what we want to create. To quote social anarchist aesthetic theorist Jesse Cohn, it draws out “the ideal from within the real”, actualising what’s already there in potential.

There’s no way to tell how long solarpunk will remain popular, or if it’ll ever take off and become more than a small group of eco-geeks online. But given its obvious richness as a site for anarchist infrapolitics, it’s well worth trying to make that happen.

Connor Owens

solarpunkanarchists.com



ON ANARCHIST ECONOMIES

Anarchism is generally not associated with economics. There is no “anarchist” school of economics as there are “Marxist,” “Keynesian” and so on.

This does not mean there are no anarchist texts on economics. Proudhon springs to mind here, with his numerous works on the subject — the three *Memoirs on property* (most famous being the first, *What is Property?*) and the two volumes of *System of Economic Contradictions* (of which, only the first has been translated) — as does Kropotkin, with his *Fields, Factories and Workshops*. However, in spite of various (important) works there is no well-established body of work.

There are various reasons for this. Partly, it is due to the typical isolation of the English-speaking movement: many works which could be used to create an anarchist economics have never been translated into English. Partly, it is due to an undeserved sense of inferiority: too many anarchists have followed Marxists by taking Marx’s *The Poverty of Philosophy* as an accurate account and honest critique of Proudhon’s ideas (it is neither, as I show in “The Poverty of (Marx’s) Philosophy,” *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 70).

Partly, it is due to anarchists being — in the main — working class people who often do not have the time or resources to do the necessary research — and more often, rightly, prefer to change the world than interpret it, particularly given we wish to end the exploitation and oppression we are subject to sooner rather than later.

What would anarchist economics be? There are two different — if somewhat interrelated — possibilities.

First, and least important, would be the economics of an anarchist society. As such a society does not exist, this explains why it is the least important. Adam Smith did not speculate about markets in theory, he described them by observing their workings (I write “markets” rather than “capitalism” as capitalism — wage labour — was not extensive when he was writing and so he was describing an economy marked by substantial self-employed artisans and farmers).

So, in this sense, any anarchist economics would develop as an actual

anarchist society develops. Attempts to produce in detail now how a libertarian socialist economy would function are misplaced. All that systems such as Parecon¹ can show is that certain notions (such as detailed planning) cannot and will not work — even if its advocates do not seem to recognise this.

So all we can do is sketch general principles — self-management, socio-economic federalism, etc. — and discuss how tendencies within capitalism show their validity. This is important, as anarchists do not abstractly compare the grim reality of capitalism to ideal visions. Rather, as Proudhon stressed (and Kropotkin praised him for), we need to analyse capitalism to understand it and to explore its tendencies — including those tendencies which point beyond it.

Which brings us to the other, more relevant, form of anarchist economics, which would be the analysis and critique of capitalism. The two are interrelated, for what we oppose in capitalism would not exist within an anarchist economy. So, for example, Proudhon’s analysis of exploitation as occurring in production — because workers have sold their liberty to the boss who keeps the “collective force” and “surplus of labour” they create — points logically to workers’ co-operatives (self-management) as the basis of a free economy. He and subsequent anarchists opposed associated labour to wage-labour.

Here we do have much to build on. Proudhon’s analysis of exploitation pre-dates Marx’s near identical one by two decades — ironically in 1847 Marx mocks the Frenchman for advocating what he later came to advocate in 1867 (see my “Proudhon’s Constituted Value and the Myth of Labour Notes,” *Anarchist Studies* 25:1). Other insights, including methodological ones, can be drawn from his and Kropotkin’s contributions — although much of it may need to be translated first!

This does not mean we cannot usefully draw upon other schools. Marx, for all his flaws, provided genuine insights into the workings of capitalism. Keynes may have sought to save capitalism from itself, but to do so he had to understand how

it works and so is worth reading. The post-Keynesian school, likewise, has a substantial amount of work which would be of use in constructing an anarchist economics (Steve Keen, author of the excellent *Debunking Economics*, is a post-Keynesian). Those schools which have been developed — often explicitly so — to defend capitalism (such as neo-classicalism) have little to offer, except perhaps as examples of what not to do.

Which points to another key aspect of any anarchist economics, an understanding of the flaws of other schools — particularly the mainstream neo-classical school.

It should help us see when we are being lied to or when certain conclusions are based on preposterous assumptions or models. The same applies to Marxist economics, which all too often woefully mixes up empirical reality and explanatory categories. As such, it would play a key role in intellectual self-defence.

The key issue, though, is not to confuse understanding how capitalism works from a libertarian perspective, an anarchist economics, with the economics of an anarchy.

So an anarchist economics in this sense is still in its early days — even after over 150 years! — but there is a foundation there which can be usefully built upon. The real question is, how do we start? As Kropotkin suggests, by basing our analysis of empirical evidence rather than the abstract model building of neoclassical economics. We need to root our understanding of capitalism in the reality of capitalism — and our struggles against it.

This is no trivial task — but one which would be of benefit.

Iain McKay

1. *Participatory economics suggests a collectively planned economy with shared baseline access to resources and some augmented personal income rewarding high effort or dangerous work*



THE SPY OF ANGEL ALLEY



After years of obstruction from the Met police, names of spycops have finally been filtering through from the Undercover Policing Inquiry this year.

Among them was one Roger Thorley, confirmed to be an alias of Met spymaster Roger Pearce as he infiltrated Freedom Press in the 1980s.

After an investigation tracking his articles through the paper and talking to old comrades, *Freedom* can reveal at least some of the story of Roger Pearce as he used our paper to worm his way into Northern Ireland.

Writing under the moniker R.T, Pearce penned a series of articles over the course of the period 1980-81 and then joined a fact-finding mission to Belfast, before disappearing from sight

Most of these essays were dryly written, but heavily critical assessments of the policing and justice systems with a focus on the situation in Northern Ireland, suggesting among other things that IRA members detained by Britain should be treated as political prisoners.

Pearce joins other undercovers with links to Northern Ireland and would go on to become the Met's Director of Intelligence and head of Special Branch from 1998-2003.

Anarchists who were active at the time do not, for the most part, remember Pearce very well and as far as can be told he was never an active editor at the paper. Some memories do survive however, which fit with what we now know to have become Met standard operating procedure for infiltrators.

David Elder, a Freedom volunteer at the time, recalls: "He was a likeable sort of guy that didn't quite fit. He wore gold wire rimmed glasses and had a little Trotsky style goatee beard.

"He had a second-hand car (which made him very useful). Quietly spoken. His 'job' was working as a rep for someone, I had the impression it was associated with the Post Office.

"Around that time there were a few fringe figures related to the Freedom Collective. There was the 'old guard' Phillip Sansom, Alan Albon, Donald Room, Dave Peers etc and a few younger people who were involved in the paper and hanging around the bookshop. This was the group with whom he became associated.

"There was a friend of Jim Huggon, Annie I think her name was, 'Dave Spain' (not his real name) and another guy called 'Dave Sparks' (not is real name). These four, along with Roger, made a little grouping as an alternative to the Freedom old guard who they considered too conservative. I was also loosely associated with them."

One comrade remembers that he was the "unofficial chauffeur" of Leah Feldman, a grandee of earlier times in the movement who, it was said, had been at the funeral of Peter Kropotkin 60 years earlier. Other memories place him as having a girlfriend who was also an activist, though this can't be confirmed.

What can be confirmed is that when inquiry head Mitting defined Pearce's writing as "virulently anti-police" he wasn't exaggerating — and it was specifically in

favour of the IRA. In one article, *Prisoners of Politics*, the editors debate "R.T" over his demand that IRA detainees should have political prisoner status, noting "all prisoners are political".

But it is R.T's final article which should raise the most eyebrows. In 'The Not So Distant Struggle' he reports back from a fact-finding mission to Belfast that he had inveigled himself onto. The consummate London police spy's empathetic report on the Troops Out phenomenon, which suggests a close working relationship with the then-active Belfast Anarchist Collective, notes:

"Within a short distance of Britain we are daily witnessing a most repressive regime whose intensity supports no comparison with life in London; a regime where there is near total monitoring of movement day and night, where constant use is made of the Prevention of Terrorism Act to detain and prosecute 'political offenders'".

This was a paid-up member of the British State writing that:

"Ideological scruples must not be allowed to erode the clear responsibility of focusing attention on what has become the embodiment of the repressive state visibly at work in utilising all its resources, using the streets of Belfast, Derry and elsewhere as a prime testing ground for future urban unrest in Britain.

"In doing so, the striking image of people demanding to determine their own existence emerges not just from individual IRA actions, but rather from the close communities of which the IRA guerrillas are an indissoluble part."

It's an analysis many anarchists and leftists would agree with, then and now. But for an agent of the Crown, misleading would be an understatement.

Pearce was so embedded in the heart of the "repressive regime" he would become ringmaster to the many other liars and manipulators of the Met in their efforts to destroy resistance in Belfast and beyond.



STAYING PUNK AND

INTERVIEW: MICHELLE CRUZ GONZALES

Since the 18th century, European and Western anarchists have been keenly interested in education. While figures such as William Godwin and Max Stirner helped with the initial framing, interest and application increased in the late 19th century. From the time of Ferrer and the Modern Schools in New York City (1911), anarchist education developed rhizomatically in multiple simultaneous directions. This profile of Michelle Cruz Gonzales is the first in a profile series on educators, non-traditional and traditional, who see themselves and their educational work as anti-authoritarian or working towards significant social change.

Michelle Cruz Gonzales is a Xicana, punk rock musician, author, and educator. Her personal and professional identities are defined in large part as by being a Xicana practitioner of Orwell's anti-authoritarian cultural and writing practices. Author of *The Spitboy Rule*, Gonzales agreed to share her time to talk about teaching and working as an anti-authoritarian and punk rocker in education.

How has your experience in punk culture influenced your work as an educator?

Punk culture influences nearly every part of my life, especially teaching and learning. I was quiet about it for many years but there is nothing like perimenopause to reinvigorate a woman's punk ethos. I've been thinking a lot about my inner-punk girl a lot. She identifies very strongly with her students, can almost understand what they are going through, their desire for a teacher who respects them and what they are going through. A teacher who won't dismiss them, their ideas, or their particular struggles, even struggles that are unique to millennials, the kinds of attributes that get written about in popular culture, the accusations of narcissism, sense of entitlement, how scattered they are viewed as being. Teaching young adults feels very much like being in a punk band like Spitboy, a message-first band, a band who

challenged people to think in new ways. I gave a talk at USC recently, and I said that if Spitboy were a class, we'd be a gender studies class. While I don't teach gender studies, per say, there was always something sort of academic about what we were doing. A lot of our songs were inspired by books like *Mismeasure of Woman* by Carol Tavris, *Back Lash* by Susan Faludi, *Ultimate Violations* by Judith Rowlands, *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* by Alice Walker.

What are the most significant challenges radical or anti-authoritarian educators face when teaching, and how do you address these challenges?

Internal conflict about how to manage a classroom is a common challenge, the thought of being "in charge" of people when you'd really rather people just be in charge of themselves. Grades and grading is another issue. One way I deal with my anxiety about grades is to allow for there to be a certain margin of error on my part: bad teaching, not being clear when I could have been, bad math, assignments not actually put into the grading system when they should have been, things like that. I always round up when any grade is on the 9's. However, a bigger issue is what grades come to represent and how they almost totally detract from the real purpose of higher ed and that is learning, learning to be a good communicator, critical thinker, and a fully-functioning member of a republic.

A critique of radicals in academia is that we are parasites or hypocrites because we take money from the State via pay and benefits. How do you address this tension?

This question made me laugh a little, given how important what we do is, and how little we're paid in comparison to other industries, but I know this is not the concern of anti-capitalists. I'm obviously not above "taking money

from the state," but it's something that I think about. I feel that a lot of what I do in my role as an educator verges on activism, things like helping to end reliance on standardized testing (on my campus and helping spread the word about use of overall HS GPA for placement) which disproportionately impacts students of colour, but I am terribly aware that it isn't activism given that I get paid to do that work. I use campus meetings, time, and resources to do this work, work that many would not choose to do, that many would not bother with, but I am not usually doing it for free, so I try not to get all romantic about this work as activism. Regarding state money; it's actually not the state's money, it's taxpayer's money, and in addition to my salary, I oversee two rather large pots of money that comes from taxpayer dollars: the Basic Skills Student Transformations Grant (three-



TEACHING LESSONS

year grant) and the Basic Skills Grant (annual funds). I take spending tax payers dollars very seriously; spending this money to create student support programs should be done with sufficient planning and based on data and best practices. I went to a conference recently that was fully-funded by one of these grants, and I took one of my own personal days in order to fly out early to save money, as it felt like the right thing to do. I totally get that it's a privilege to have personal days too.

For folks who love learning but have issues with school-related authority, what do you recommend?

I would recommend asking other students for teacher recommendations, and if you have to go to a site like ratemyprofessor.com, but do read between the lines, as many people who post on those sites either really hate or really like the instructors who they rate. Read the ratings like you'd read book or restaurant reviews. That

is to say read several, employ some critical analysis, and decide whether that teacher would be good for you. Another way is to ask instructors who you feel safe with and whose style you like, who they'd recommend. Another thing to do would be to learn about the different learning styles, figure out what yours is and know that when something about an instructor really annoys you, it might just be that they are teaching in or to their own learning style, something they might not be able to stop doing. Sometimes just knowing opens our minds and creates understanding.

Have you found the same concerns about "selling out" among radical or activist educators as in the punk scene?

This selling out idea exists everywhere, in academia and/or politics it usually happens within the context of compromising one's values. Ironically, compromise is one strategy that we all must employ in all sorts of areas in order to find peace and/or to jump start change. However, another way to look the idea of selling out is from the perspective of people with privilege. In grad school a lot of folks in the MFA program that I was in didn't want to teach because reading because they thought reading bad/developing writing would ruin or taint their own writing, like it would taint the creative process, so then teaching would be a form of selling out for your art. I called bullshit on that because for me, a first-generation high school and college grad and a Xicana, someone who came from a family of campesinos/rancheros on one side (artists on the other), people who worked with their hands, the idea of looking down at teaching seemed insane and coming from a place of privilege, this idea that a writer should be above teaching, service work. In the punk scene many of the people who I've seen "sell out" are people who came from working class backgrounds, people for whom upwardly mobility would have been very difficult to attain, and a living through music presented itself. With all that I'd like to stress that it's not uncommon, in my experience,

for people with privilege to hold those with less privilege back with the sell-out threat. For me it's a privilege to teach, and it gives me a platform that people in my family never had. Of course this platform puts me in a privileged position, one that I work hard not to abuse.

What thinkers, writers, activists, or radicals have influenced your work as an educator and anti-authoritarian?

Joe Strummer, George Orwell, Alice Walker, Margaret Atwood, Barbara Ehrenreich, Ana Castillo, Sonia Nazario, The Clash, Dead Kennedys, Paolo Freire, Corky Gonzales, Ruben Salazar, and more recently John Hetts, and Black Minds Matter creators Dr. Luke Wood and Frank Harris III.

How do you address the challenge of balancing authentic learning with making sure your students get the necessary boxes checked for their degree and thus the ability to find a job?

The state of CA is super focused on moving students through the pathway at a much faster pace than ever before, which is in some ways good because we finally, via data, understand that students don't need as much "remediation" as we have traditionally thought, but there are also cost-saving reasons for this focus on pace. The real downside is that it moves the idea of authentic learning even further away from the end-goal from students who are already grade, degree, and job focused. I speak to authentic learning in my classrooms often; I do not sacrifice rigor, and I work really hard to allow time for real Socratic-style discussions in which students are responding to one another, really engaging with the ideas of the course together.

Interview by Luther Blisset



FREEDOM UPDATE

For this summer issue of *Freedom* we can look back at some progress at the Press which remains, for the most part, reasonably solvent, sharing the building costs with a reliable set of anarchist and anarchist-friendly groups while making enough to cover everyday eventualities.

Publishing and Media

While running the Freedom building at 84b Angel Alley is probably our most important task at the moment — providing central London digs as it does for important solidarity groups such as the Advisory Service For Squatters, Haven and the National Bargee Travellers Association as well as others such as Corporate Watch and the Anarchist Federation — we have been seeing some welcome progress in our original function as a publisher.

Following our successful launch of two books at the Anarchist Bookfair, *Slow Burning Fuse* and *deep ecology and anarchism* (see back page for details) we have been continuing to grow our news site with daily articles and have distributed thousands of copies of our printed October issue. With this journal we are continuing a basic print service for free, and we plan to publish at least two new books later this year, resources permitting.

Since 2016 we have upped our audience online, averaging about 8,000 users per month at the start of this year with a rising trend, and have a much-improved social media presence, particularly on Twitter and Facebook.

A clear editorial perspective has also emerged, emphasising an online magazine feel with a mix of current events reporting, features and analysis that are focused on anarchist activities and issues, picking up on an increasing need as news consumption has fractured into alienated social media milieus following the collapse of such activist hubs as *Schnews* and *Indymedia*.

We are always looking for writers and people who would like to contribute on

the editorial side, if you would like to get involved email editor@freedompress.org.uk.

We have also made strides with another major facet of our responsibilities — renewing publication of our extensive back catalogue of newspapers. The Freedom Digital Archiving Project aims to put as many of the roughly 3,000 issues of Freedom since 1886 online for free public use as possible. Since we launched it in October, incorporating work from sites such as sparrowsnest.org.uk, archive.org and libcom.org it has grown spectacularly and at the time of writing freedomnews.org.uk/archive contains 1,134 issues, from the very first in 1886 to 2017, with examples from every decade and particularly comprehensive sets covering the 1910s, '50s and '60s. It's a bit rough and ready in places, but represents a huge potential resource for anarchist historians.

Bookshop

Last year and early 2018 has seen some upheavals as longstanding comrades have stepped back after in some cases some quite heroic efforts to keep our collective head above water. To all those volunteers we extend our undying gratitude and we look forward to seeing you again in future. But the bookshop as a whole endures, and continues to provide much of the financial stability and resource needed to keep the project going, and the building running day to day.

The next few months will likely be a transitional period as new people come in and get trained up, and we're always looking for help in that regard, so if you think you can help you can get in touch at shop@freedompress.org.uk.

Building issues

The Big Rebuild fund, which we did a major drive for last year, has just about hit the halfway point of the £30,000 that we needed to fix up the roof, walls and some of the internals, meaning that this spring and summer, once the rain is reliably holding off, we can get key works

underway. We are hugely grateful for all the generosity that has been shown in what has been a hard few years for both the movement and Britain.

Donations are still very welcome and will inevitably be needed down the road, so please do keep sending those in, either as cheques made out to Freedom Press, or online at www.paypal.me/fbuildingcollective. We have a lot of plans for the place once we have it back up to snuff, and as one of only two buildings in London that are fully-owned by the anarchist movement it's incredibly important to keep it upright and healthy!

Many thanks should also go to the folks who continue to improve what used to be known as the Autonomy Club (now Decentre). The room on the second floor, which is open to both booking and as a convivial space for anarchists to congregate, now has a proper kitchen space, rugs, comfy chairs and even its own computer with laser printer for short leaflet runs (by donation). People are encouraged to come and check the place out — and it's potentially available for evening bookings of small meetings (ask at the shop).

ABOUT US

Freedom Press is an independent, non-sectarian, non-profit publishing house and bookshop collective dedicated to preserving and promoting anarchist ideas.

First established in 1886 by Charlotte Wilson as a voice for the anarchist tradition, *Freedom* has published more or less erratically ever since, making it the oldest such organisation in Britain, and possibly the English-speaking world.

Alongside our own extensive back catalogue we stock thousands of books, papers and pamphlets, as well as the latest magazines, periodicals and newsletters from all the major anarchist and radical groups.



EDITORIAL

THE DREAM OF '68 IS NEEDED TODAY

“The rue Gay-Lussac still carries the scars of the ‘night of the barricades’. Burnt out cars line the pavement, their carcasses a dirty grey under the missing paint. The cobbles, cleared from the middle of the road, lie in huge mounds on either side. A vague smell of tear gas still lingers in the air.”

There is a certain romantic aura to this post-riot description by Maurice Brinton, writing from the streets of Paris in May 1968.

The highest ebb of France’s late-’60s surge in social rebellion marks its 50th anniversary this year, when first students and then workers broke with the status quo to create a temporary bubble of resistance, not in the sense we are so used to today of a rearguard action defending our deteriorating conditions, but against the very root of capitalist alienation.

“Beneath the pavement, the beach”, rioters cried. Sloganeers graffiti’d the streets with a line lifted from the Situationist International: “Humanity will not be happy until the last bureaucrat is hung with the guts of the last capitalist!”

Barricades were thrown up, defying the city planning of Georges-Eugène Haussmann, who had remade Paris 100 years prior specifically to stymie such tactics and secure elite dominance.

The dream was not to nationalise, but to kill “the cop that sleeps in every one of us” — to embrace freedom and utopias yet to be.

It is a vision we’ve since seen recede over the horizon.

In the years before neoliberalism, the method of control and social reproduction was a State-led compact with capital, where the power of one underwrote and stabilised the aggressive expansionism of the other.

But with the consolidation of ever more powerful globalised business interests, and revisions of economic order entailed by privatisations and crushing victories over working class organisation, we have seen a retreat into rose-tinted visions of State protection as all we can achieve. A

blessed relief from the revised compact in which capital’s aggression invades ever more of our lives.

The deal was altered, we pray only that it not be altered any further.

Today’s driving Left-utopian vision in Britain is as a result pathetically anemic.

Far from hanging the bureaucrat, we imagine them as hero-surgeons cleaning away metastasized lumps of profiteering “service provision” embodied by the likes of Atos, Virgin and G4S. Rather than digging beneath the pavement, we demand only that it be cleaned by the council. Rather than kill our inner cop we shout to hire 10,000 more.

Such a retreat is of course understandable — since 1968 economic logic and political will have pushed us time and again towards the edges of survival. Jobs have lost their stickiness, welfare has been stripped and living costs gouged to the point that the old anarchist ideal of voluntarism has become nigh-on impossible for most.

Mountainous expressions of the cancer, made of glass and steel and concrete, have spread across our skylines, with giant FOR SALE banners covering streets where working people once lived and long shadows blocking the very light from our eyes.

The dominance of capital is so intimidating, so ever present, the squeeze is so tight around our chests that even the tiniest lifting of pressure is seen as a necessary first step towards something better while the dreams of the 20th century feel long faded.

We chase State control, “enlightened” automation, and administered universal incomes within the status quo, then call it socialism.

But we cannot truly function without real utopias to draw on, it leaves us chasing least worst options within the capitalist framework, accepting their admonishments that ultimately There Is No Alternative to managed decline.

Corbyn first accepts nukes, then Nato. He accepts limits to his cherished re-nationalisation hopes and mouths

platitudes about “managed migration” as though the inherent violence of such a position is merely a matter of balance sheets. One in, one out, no jeans or trainers. There Is No Alternative.

His borough councils wax electoral about their progressive values, before not only accepting developmental cancers, but clearing space for them because financially, There Is No Alternative.

This is the Real in the absence of utopias, a slowed process of rot, with excuses galore.

It is time for us to rediscover the great lessons of Paris 1968. Not of the art of throwing bricks (for we can learn that on the fly), but of the need which drives us to imagine and strive for more than simple grey certainties.

Below our feet, even now, that beach is still there. We need to start digging for it again. In this issue we explore solarpunk, a single expression of a vision beyond where we build for ourselves, not for the mere permission of others to live our lives without want. There are so many other visions past and yet to come, and it’s vital that we explore them.





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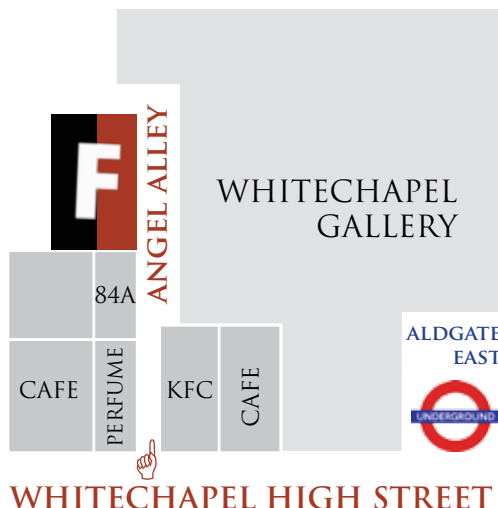
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